



## Council on Optometric Practitioner Education

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*A Program of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry for Accreditation of CE*

### ***COPE Announces Transition Period for Interactive Online CE***

*10/29/2021*

In response to travel restrictions and many states adopting emergency orders related to COVID-19 in 2020, COPE temporarily modified its format policy to allow COPE Administrators and Accredited Providers to give “live” credit for CE courses that were presented in an interactive distance learning format (i.e. live webinar.) Since in-person CE is resuming and state emergency orders have expired, this temporary policy modification is ending 12/31/2021 and “live” COPE CE will require both learners and instructors to be physically present in the same room.

Although the temporary live policy modification is ending, COPE will not be reverting back to all original format policies in 2022. The COPE Governing Committee is working on a proposal for permanent changes to COPE’s format requirements in response to the ever-changing CE landscape and learning technology. **The period of 1/1/2022-6/30/2022 will be a transition period for the COPE Governing Committee to complete research, develop a proposal, and collect stakeholder feedback on proposed format changes. During this 6-month transition period, post-course tests will NOT be required for COPE Accredited INTERACTIVE DISTANCE LEARNING courses/activities.**

In order to be considered INTERACTIVE Distance Learning by COPE, a course must have synchronous learning (the learners and the instructor(s) attend together at the same time). Attendees must be able to have immediate interaction with the instructor (i.e. live webinar). The activity can only be presented at one specified time, and once it has taken place, the learners may no longer participate in that activity. CE Providers must have a way to confirm the learners’ attendance for every course before issuing certificates of attendance. The post-course test will not be required during the transition period, as mentioned in the above paragraph.

Courses that are asynchronous learning and do not meet the requirements for interactivity above are considered by COPE to be ENDURING DISTANCE LEARNING courses. Recorded webinars are an example of ENDURING Distance Learning activities where there is no immediate interaction with the instructor and participants can choose when to participate. During the transition period, ENDURING DISTANCE LEARNING courses will still be required to have a post-course test that has been reviewed by a school of optometry, medicine, pharmacy or osteopathy.

COPE feels that the quality of education is more important than the location of the course. COPE Accreditation is based on developing CE activities around optometrist’s educational needs and professional practice gaps in conjunction with assessing outcomes and applying quality improvement measures. Continuing education delivery methods changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and technology now allows for immediate interaction with a course instructor regardless of learners being present in the same room. During the pandemic, optometrists were still able to participate in COPE Accredited CE activities, and many of them reported that they learned just as much, or more, in a virtual environment than they previously did in a face-to-face environment. However, CE requirements for license renewal are set by the Optometric State and Provincial Licensing Boards, and many of these boards still limit the number of online hours that will apply for license renewal regardless of whether the CE activity is interactive.

Please note that although COPE's policy is being modified during the transition period to not require a post-course test for INTERACTIVE DISTANCE LEARNING courses, individual State and Provincial Licensing Boards may have different rules. COPE advises optometrists to contact the State or Provincial Board where they are licensed for verification of what is acceptable for license renewal. If you have any questions about COPE's transition period please contact Sierra Powell, Manager of Accreditation Services, at [spowell@arbo.org](mailto:spowell@arbo.org).